

Institute for Blind Children, San Juan, Porto Rico. (First Building completed.)

## CHARITABLE INSTITUTIONS OF PORTO RICO UNDER THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

By EDITH M. IRVINE-RIVERA

There are seven hundred boys and girls in the Charity Schools of the Government of Porto Rico. They are cared for in two large buildings situated in Santurce, a suburb of San Juan. Each building has a graded school ranging from the first to the eighth grade, and a two year high-school course is also offered. The dormitories are well ventilated, the dining rooms pleasant, the hospital wards light and airy and there are spacious play grounds around each building. Teaching is supervised by the Department of Education, and is in charge of the best teachers obtainable.

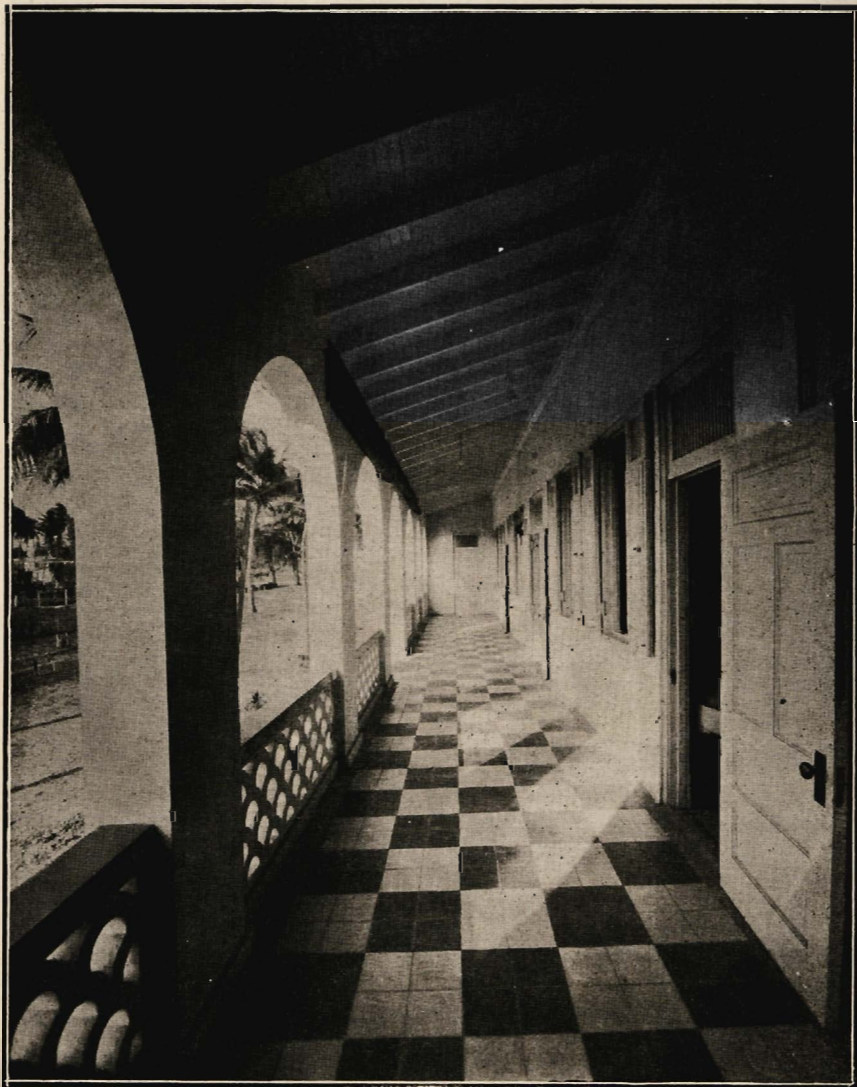
In the Girls' Charity School there is an industrial section where the inmates learn to sew, cut and fit, do drawn work and embroidery, make lace and do all kinds of fine hand work. Great stress is laid upon gymnastics and physical exercises of all kinds. In fact, the aim is to prepare the inmates so thoroughly both as to health and education that they will be ready to fill useful gaps in the community of which they are to form a part on leaving the institution.

The Boys' Charity School has four hundred inmates. Aside from the graded and high-school courses there is also an Academy of Music with a band of forty boys who are already musicians, and forty who are learning. The industrial section of this institution is most important and interesting. The boys choose the trade they like best and then are trained to become either efficient masons, carpenters, shoemakers, tailors or plumbers. They also learn mechanical drawing and are fully equipped to earn a skilled laborer's wages when leaving the institution. They do all the repairs at the Charity Schools, and at times do repairing at other government buildings. They make and repair shoes for the four hundred inmates of the school; make tables, cupboards, flower stands, garden seats and a variety of ornamental pieces.



Group of Inmates of the Institute for Blind Children

The boys are organized into a battalion of four companies, each company consisting of seventy-two members; a captain, a first



A Gallery of the Institute for Blind Children

lieutenant, a second lieutenant, five sergeants and eight corporals who receive daily instruction in military tactics. These exercises as

well as physical training are carried on every afternoon and there is a band concert every morning. The inmates of these institutions are in splendid health and when they are discharged, at the age of eighteen, they are prepared in every sense to make their way in the world.

The Institute for Blind Children is not yet completed, but it is planned to accommodate a large number of inmates. Four acres of ground have been allotted to the institution which may comprise up to fourteen buildings if its development warrants the expense. The plan presents two buildings for boys, two for girls, a school building, a printing office, cottages for teachers and superintendent, and a Music Hall. The first building which has just been erected and is at present occupied by all the inmates of the Institute for the Blind is the gift of the Junior Red Cross. It was built at a cost of \$20,000 and will eventually be used for the older girls. The Institute has some thirty-five inmates some of whom are totally and others partially blind. The school course ranges from kindergarten to the sixth grade. The Braille system is used and the teachers and superintendents in charge have taken special courses at the Perkins Institute of Massachusetts, which renders them thoroughly efficient for this work.

The Industrial Department is a special feature of this Institute and the inmates find great satisfaction in learning crafts and trades and fancywork of all kind. Basketry, pottery, knitting, printing and binding, cross-stitching, etc., are taught. During the past year thirty-five woolen shawls were knit by these pupils and presented to the patients of the Leper Colony.

The Institute for the Blind has been greatly benefited by the generosity of the New York Institute for the Education of the Blind which has donated machines for the printing and binding of books with raised letters. Eight books which have proved very useful to the Institute were printed during the year. One of the members of the faculty prepared, by the Braille method, thirty-six volumes of Morin's Phonetic Method and Heath's Third Reader and the pupils themselves wrote four volumes of the Huyke primer.

Within a short time two new buildings will be erected with funds appropriated by the Legislature of Porto Rico and when these are completed the activities of the Institute will be facilitated greatly.

The Asylum for the Blind in Ponce has ninety-one inmates at present. Those who are admitted to this institution, and are not totally blind, are given special treatment and when they fully recover their sight, are discharged. Seventy-five operations were performed during the year and the physical condition of the inmates is good, generally speaking.

The aim of this institution is to take care of the destitute blind of Porto Rico. Those who cannot be cured are given food and shelter and curable patients are given the attention essential to their recovery so that they may be self-supporting when they leave the institution.

Measures are always being taken to improve all these charitable institutions.

